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**SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC  
FEDERATION  
U. S. A.**

**PRINCIPLES AND PROGRAM**

**Social Democratic Federation U. S. A.**

Albee Building

G Street at 15th, N. W.

Washington, D. C.

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1937P

**SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC  
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U. S. A.**

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**THE  
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION  
WHAT IT IS**

THE Social Democratic Federation of the U. S. A. was founded at a convention in Pittsburgh, Penn., on May 29-30, 1937, by delegates representing democratic Socialist organizations in 19 states.

It adopted a clear and intelligent declaration of principles, elected a national executive committee and several sub-committees and expressed the opinion of the delegates on a number of international and national questions.

The collapse of the old Socialist party had left many of its former members throughout the country without an organization. For several years thousands of democratic Socialists, among them many pioneers and well-known men and women who gave a life-time of service to the Socialist cause, were driven out of the party by the Thomas-Trotsky-Communist forces then in control. Charters were revoked and whole state organizations such as New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Maryland, and such devoted foreign language organizations as the Finnish and Jewish Socialist Federations, were forced to sever their connection with the official Socialist party.

Having reduced the membership from over 20,000 to far less than half, the Thomas-Trotsky-Communist combination then started a mutual extermination battle.

There are thousands of sincere and devoted Socialists who are anxious to join an organization of democratic Socialists and carry on effective work for the cause. The Social Democratic Federation extends a comradely welcome to all those who hold ideals in common with democratic Socialists the world over.

The Social Democratic Federation of the U. S. A. is related in program, philosophy and ideals with all Labor and Social Democratic parties in the world. Its objectives are the collective ownership and democratic management of the basic industries, the abolition of the profit motive in industry and the ending of class rule and exploitation.

Social Democrats aim to achieve these ends by encouraging and aiding the organization of the workers particularly, and the public generally, in powerful and aggressive political, industrial, cooperative and cultural organizations and by their faith in democracy and through democratic procedure to move forward towards democratic Socialism.

There are two principal viewpoints on social change. The Communist and left wing dream of an impending catastrophe, a rapid or sudden collapse of Capitalism and the possible revolt of the masses in "chaos and confusion", a contempt for democracy and a deep distrust in the abilities and potentialities of the common mass. These ultra "revolutionists" care only for a small highly disciplined crew who are to occupy strategic positions and manipulate the revolting masses under a party dictatorship which they euphonistically call "the dictatorship of the proletariat." All those who oppose these self-appointed saviors are to be ruthlessly exterminated.

The viewpoint of the Social Democrats, so powerfully represented by the Socialist and Labor parties of Great Britain, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Finland, Argentina, Australia, New Zealand and other countries, is one of implicit faith in the abilities and potentialities of the masses and in the efficacy of democratic progress. The tactics of Social Democracy are in consonance with their philosophy. Social Democrats have organized or have helped to organize powerful mass political parties. They built or helped to build strong and militant trade unions. They have organized or aided in the organization of successful cooperative enterprises.

Social Democrats have also organized cul-

tural and sport societies and through newspapers, periodicals, books, leaflets, forums and schools they are active in the enlightening of the masses, educating, organizing, and inspiring them for social consciousness, responsibilities and power.

The Social Democratic Federation of the U. S. A. is an alliance of state organizations, some functioning as political parties, as for example the Socialist party in Pennsylvania and in Connecticut with their municipal administrations in Reading and Bridgeport; in other states Social Democrats are members of Labor parties or are helping to organize Labor parties, as for example, the American Labor Party of New York, the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota and Labor's Non-Partisan League elsewhere. In those latter states Social Democrats maintain their organization as Socialist educational and propaganda societies and faithfully contribute their energies to the Labor political parties.

We appeal to all those who are in agreement or in sympathy with our views to join our ranks. Ask for our literature, attend our public meetings. Help us increase our forces, our influence and the attainment of our goal—the cooperative commonwealth and the international relationship and harmony of all the toilers of the world.



**DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES  
of the  
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION  
U. S. A.**

(Adopted at Pittsburgh, May 29-30, 1937)

**T**HE ultimate aim of the Social Democratic movement is the abolition of class rule and class conflict, with all their evil consequences, and the development of a state of society in which the few shall no longer be able to enjoy luxury and ease at the expense of overwork, want, and insecurity for the masses.

This is today a thoroughly practicable ideal. So greatly have science and invention increased our productive powers that an abundance of all the good things of life for the whole population could be produced without subjecting any human being to drudgery or exhausting toil. The continued existence of poverty is due solely to causes which intelligent social action can overcome.

To assure plenty, security, leisure, and freedom for all, it is necessary that the existing property system, the existing forms of economic control and distribution of wealth, be so changed as to adapt them to the conditions of modern life. Property institutions are the creatures of law. By law they have been changed in ages past, and by law they can and must be changed in the years to come.

In a stage of economic development where production is carried on by hand labor, with the use of simple and inexpensive tools, each individual can employ himself and enjoy the full product of his labor. In such a stage, private ownership of the instruments of production means economic liberty on an individualistic scale.

**Workers and Exploiters**

**T**HAT state of affairs no longer exists. Modern industry requires the use of enormously costly aggregates of land, buildings, and machinery, operated by the combined labor of great numbers of workers. Under these conditions private ownership means power for the few and subjection for the many.

Social Democracy does not condemn private property as such. It condemns the private ownership of great socially necessary means of production, under which the workers are employed only on such terms as assure an unearned income to the owners and are thrown into idleness and want whenever the owners cannot profit by their labor. Only by the socialized ownership and democratic control of such productive wealth, doing away with exploitation and making the satisfaction of human wants the ruling motive in production, can the ideal of a classless society be realized.

The interest of the wage-working class, in the broadest sense of that term, imperatively demands this change. But the wage workers are not the only sufferers under the existing system.

**Farmers Losing Ground**

The once great class of independent working farmers is steadily losing ground. They are exploited by the capitalist groups which control the transportation and marketing of their produce, by those from which they must purchase implements and supplies, and above all by those which control money and credit. Year by year many thousands of them lose title to their lands and either sink into the class of farm tenants or else give up farming altogether and seek employment in an overcrowded labor market. Year by year still larger numbers of their sons and daughters leave the land and are merged in the wage-working class. Meanwhile, capitalistic large farms, owned by corporations and operated by wage labor, are growing at the expense of the self-employed farmers.

The development of industrial technique, involving the need for ever larger plants and more nearly automatic machinery, not only dis-employs workers and sharpens competition in the labor market, but also makes it increasingly difficult for small enterprises to survive.

### Small Trades Doomed

THE methods of great capitalism are now invading the field of retail trade and ruining myriads of small merchants and dealers. The same forces are at work in the field of public entertainment, of book and newspaper publication, and many others in which small enterprise formerly had a chance of success.

Nor do the professional and intellectual workers escape the conquering march of centralized capital. Engineers, accountants, technicians, scientists and inventors, research workers, members of the medical and allied professions, teachers, writers, and artists are in ever greater numbers being brought down to the status of wage workers, competing for employment and often seeking it in vain.

All these middle classes are being crushed by the same power which exploits the wage workers. Although their immediate interests may conflict with those of the wage workers at some points, they coincide with them at many others. In the long run, they all have a common interest in changing the basis of our economic system.

### The Choice We Face

IT would not be desirable to go back to the old methods of hand labor and small enterprise, thereby sacrificing the potential benefits of increasing capacity for production. Nor would it be possible even if it were to be desired. The choice before us is either to permit the uncontrolled development of capitalism to concentrate all power in the hands of an oligarchy of high finance and reduce the mass of the people to abject servitude, or to assert the right and duty of the nation to control and remodel its economic life.

Under the stimulus of the depression which began in 1929, the tide of public opinion has been turning towards social control. Important measures of social and labor legislation have been adopted. But these are only a small part of what needs to be done. There is danger that with the passing of the emergency, the work may be halted before it is more than well begun. There is even greater danger that, for lack of a clear view of the problem as a whole and of a far-reaching program of basic reconstruction, false steps may be made which will bring new evils into existence.

The only safety is in the rise of a great popular movement, free from all political and other entanglements with capitalistic interests and ideals, equipped with a sound understanding of economic tendencies and social forces, clearly conscious of its final goal, capable of solving problems as they arise, and using all proper methods of action to achieve its aim.

The organization of the wage workers in a strong and united *labor union movement*, the economic *organization of the working farmers* on lines answering to their needs, and the establishment of mutually helpful relations between these two groups, are absolutely necessary to defend their immediate interests and to provide the basis for the yet broader movement which must be built. Organization of purchasing power in *cooperative societies* is a valuable auxiliary. But there must also be a strong, clear-sighted and independent *political party*, national in scope, representing and supported by the two great producing classes of city and of country.

THE first principle of such a movement in all its branches must be whole-hearted devotion to the methods and ideals of democracy. No dictatorship, whatever its avowed purpose, can be trusted to bring liberty, plenty, and peace. The institutions of political democracy must be defended and improved in order that economic and social life may also be democratized.

The appeal to revolutionary violence must be repudiated. It is unnecessary and unjustified.

fiable in a country where the orderly and peaceful methods of democracy are available.

### Our Program of Action

The change from capitalism to social democracy cannot be accomplished at a single stroke. It will be a gradual process extending over a period of years. The steps by which it will be achieved can in a broad way be foreseen and planned. The steps immediately in view fall into three main groups—namely:

1.—Measures for alleviating the evils suffered by the working and middle classes while capitalism still generally prevails.

2.—Measures for the development of social services and public works to improve the condition and enrich the lives of the masses.

3.—Measures for socializing the great branches of industry, trade, and finance which are most vital to the people's needs and are now most completely dominated by great capital.

#### I. Relief and Defense

UNDER the first head we emphasize the need for—

Legislation to establish the wage workers' rights of trade union action and collective bargaining; to do away with the use of injunctions in labor disputes and to put an end to the abuse of vagrancy laws and disorderly conduct charges against labor organizers, strikers, and pickets; to repeal the so-called "criminal anarchy" and "criminal syndicalism" laws in states where these exist; to prohibit the use of spies, stool pigeons, and armed guards by employers, and to prevent the extortion often practiced by employment agencies.

Legislation to shorten the hours of labor and provide for vacations with pay; to establish a minimum wage for such elements as are least able to bargain effectively with their employers; to safeguard the workers against industrial accidents and occupational dis-

ease, and to prohibit the exploitation of child labor.

Social insurance for all against the economic losses resulting from unemployment and from maternity, sickness, accident, old age, and the death of bread winners; and social insurance for farmers against loss by drought, flood, storm, insect plagues, and other risks in agriculture.

A comprehensive system of slum clearance and of low-cost housing, jointly financed by the nation and local communities, through the extension of which private landlordism can eventually be wiped out.

The use of the taxing power and other powers of government to retard the growth of private monopolies in industry and trade, so as to reduce to a minimum the suffering of middle-class elements in the inevitable development from small-scale to large-scale operation.

#### II. Social Services and Public Works

UNDER the second head we lay stress upon the use of a greatly increased proportion of the nation's wealth, to be obtained by steeply graduated taxation of incomes and inheritances, for non-remunerative but socially useful public works and services, such as—

Extension of the system of free education, from kindergarten to university, on a scale corresponding both in quantity and quality to the people's needs, to the nation's productive powers, and to the standards of modern pedagogic science; the teaching institutions to be supplemented by libraries, museums, concert halls, and other cultural facilities for the whole people.

Development of a comprehensive public health system, including provision in every locality of adequate hospitals, clinics, sanatoriums, and convalescence homes, and progressive socialization of medical and related services.

Provision everywhere of adequate recreational facilities for young and old, including

parks and playgrounds, fields and buildings for athletic sports, bathing beaches and swimming pools, vacation camps, and so forth, to be put at the people's service free or at nominal cost.

Provision throughout the country of roads, bridges, and other public improvements comparable to those already enjoyed by the more favored areas.

A comprehensive long-range program of flood control, forestation, soil preservation, drainage, and irrigation.

**W**E call attention to the fact that besides the direct value of such public works and services, their creation and maintenance will give employment to vast numbers of persons disemployed by capitalist development; that by increasing their purchasing power it will benefit the farmers and shopkeepers; that in the main it will not compete with private business and therefore will not throw other workers out of employment; and that its cost can and should be borne by accumulated private riches and large property income.

### III. Toward Socialization

**SIMULTANEOUSLY** with these measures of protection from capitalist evils and promotion of the general welfare, the powers of government must be used for the systematic transformation of private profit-making capital into socially owned means of production for use. Those branches of economic activity which are most highly monopolized and which for any reason most deeply affect the interests of society should first be dealt with.

The whole munitions industry must be nationalized without delay. A special reason in this case is the baneful influence of capitalist interests in promoting war between nations.

All capitalistic enterprises in the various branches of industry and commerce are rapidly passing under the control of a small number of great banks and other financial corporations, which are so linked together by interlocking directorates, holding companies, and other devices as to constitute an

almost complete monopoly in the field of money and credit. For this reason, and in the interest of the wage workers, the farmers, and the lower ranks of business men, the socialization of banking and credit is urgently necessary.

**T**HIS applies also to the great insurance companies, because the representatives of concentrated wealth in their boards of directors control the investment of many billions of dollars of reserves. They should accordingly be socialized along with the banks and trust companies.

The railroads and other means of transportation, together with the telegraph and telephone, are as necessary to the economic life of the whole people as are roads and the postal service. Because it was practicable to derive profit from them and because the people did not exercise social foresight at the time when they were coming into existence, these nerves and arteries of the nation were allowed to fall under capitalistic and monopolistic ownership and control. The corporations which own them received enormous subsidies from the nation, states, and municipalities. Until partially restrained by legislation, they levied exorbitant tribute upon all who needed their services. The great capitalists who dominate them have not even run them efficiently, but have looted them to the injury of the small stockholders and of the general public. It is high time that the whole business of transit, transportation, and communication should be taken over by the people.

Another group of industries which is in every sense ripe for socialization, which occupies a key position in the structure of capitalist power, and which is monopolized to a very high degree, is the production of electric power and the sale of electric current for industrial and domestic uses. Through this monopoly the lighting and transit services and other public utilities throughout the country are rapidly being linked into one nationwide instrument of exploitation. The beginning which has recently been made by the federal government in the field of power production and distribution must be energetically followed up by the nation and the

states; and in close connection therewith the public utilities must be municipalized.

#### As to Compensation

WHILE it is true that in most cases the original investment in these and other capitalist enterprises has been repaid over and again in profits derived from the exploitation of labor and super-profits extorted from the consumers, it will probably as a general rule be advisable to compensate their present owners, not upon the basis of the profits which they realize, but to an amount not exceeding the initial investment or the cost of physical replacement. The funds necessary for such purchase are to be obtained by graduated taxation of inheritances, incomes, and super-profits.

Through the measures indicated above and others of a similar nature it is within the power of the producing and exploited classes, if they but have confidence in themselves, to transform our society of non-producing owners and non-possessing workers into a social democracy in which all shall be joint owners and all comrade workers for the common good.

Thus and only thus can class rule, with its attendant evils of social strife and international war, of undeserved poverty, of corruption and servility, be transformed into a truly free and democratic society, in which useful work performed by all through far shorter hours and under far more pleasant conditions than now generally prevail, will be able to produce the material basis of a livelihood for all far better than is enjoyed today by any except the very rich.

#### For a Good New World

In the name of freedom, in the name of honesty, in the name of civilization itself, for the good of those now alive and of generations yet unborn, we call upon the workers of city and country as a class, and upon all intelligent and humane men and women, to join us in winning the good new world which is within our reach.

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